



Region Four Headquarters
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, Montana 59401
October 28, 2004

SUBJECT: Environmental Assessment for Proposed Improvements

At Giant Springs State Park, Heritage Park Unit

Good day:

Attached is an Environmental Assessment (EA) for proposed improvements at Giant Springs State Park, Heritage Park Unit, necessary to host the National Park Service Corps of Discovery II exhibit during the summer of 2005. The EA analyzed the impacts to the human and natural environment from the proposed action and alternatives.

Please review the attached EA and provide us with your comments. In order to remain on schedule to finalize the EA and implement the proposed action, your comments are requested no later than November 28, 2004. Send comments or questions to:

Heritage Unit EA
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls, Montana 59401

If you need additional information please contact the undersigned at 406-454-5846, or Mr. Roger Semler, Regional Parks Manager, at 406-454-5859.

Mike Aderhold
Regional Supervisor

Attachment:
Environmental Assessment

Environmental Assessment

National Park Service Corps of Discovery II Exhibit Site Preparation & Park Improvements

Giant Springs State Park, Heritage Unit

October 28, 2004



**Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks**

MONTANA FISH WILDLIFE & PARKS

MEPA/NEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST

NOTE: Another five pages of checklist and letters developed for 23-1-110 MCA by the Parks Division are not attached to this document. The Parks Division and each Regional Parks Manager has the 23-1-110 MCA information.

Following is the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks checklist for Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Environmental Assessments (EA's). It can also be used for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Assessment documents for Federal Aid in Wildlife (P-R) and Sport Fish (W-B) Restoration projects.

MEPA/NEPA/23-1-110 MCA CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of Proposed State Action

The proposed State action would be taken at the Heritage Park Unit of Giant Springs State Park in order to prepare and improve the site to host the National Park Service Corps of Discovery II (Lewis and Clark Expedition) exhibit on June 25 through July 4, 2005. Following the conclusion of the Corps II exhibit, these improvements will be retained to enhance the Heritage Park Unit.

2. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action

FWP has authority to provide development and access for public recreation. 23-2-101 MCA.

3. Name of Project

Giant Springs State Park, Heritage Unit and Corps of Discovery II site improvements.

4. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405

5. Estimated Construction/Commencement Date: As soon as possible

Estimated Completion Date: No later than June 1, 2005

Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 100%

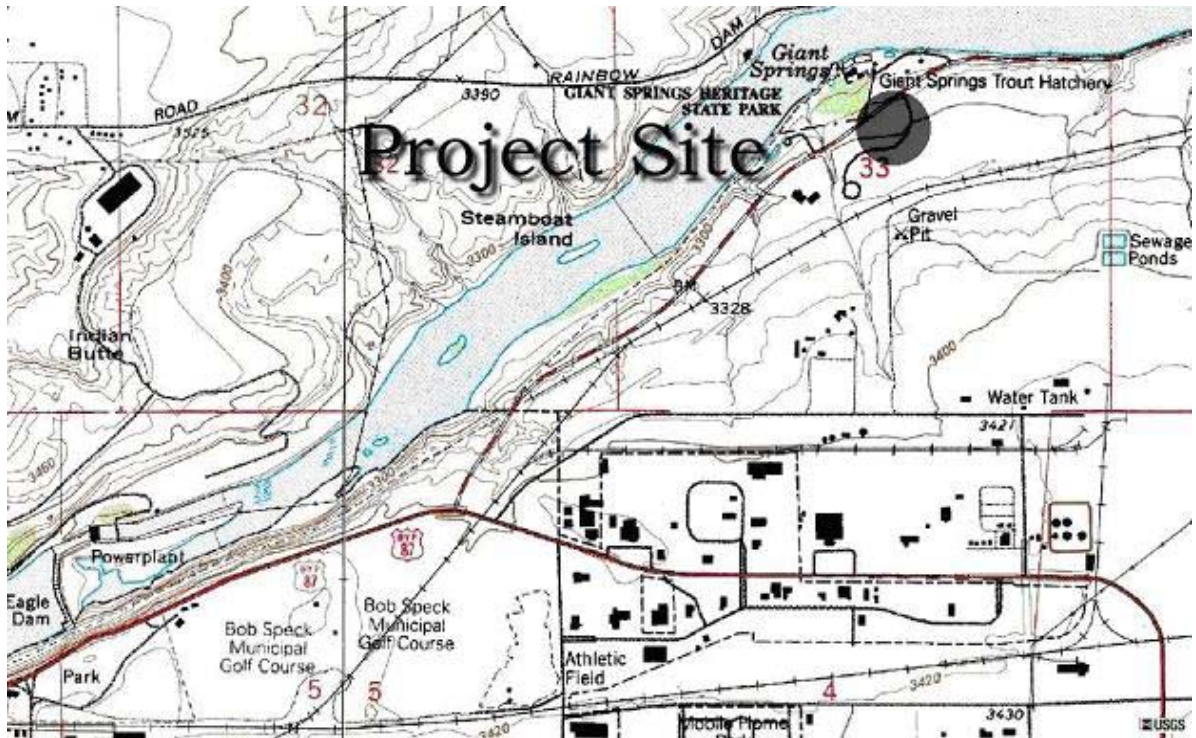
6. Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)

Cascade County, Sec 33, R4E, T21N

7. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:

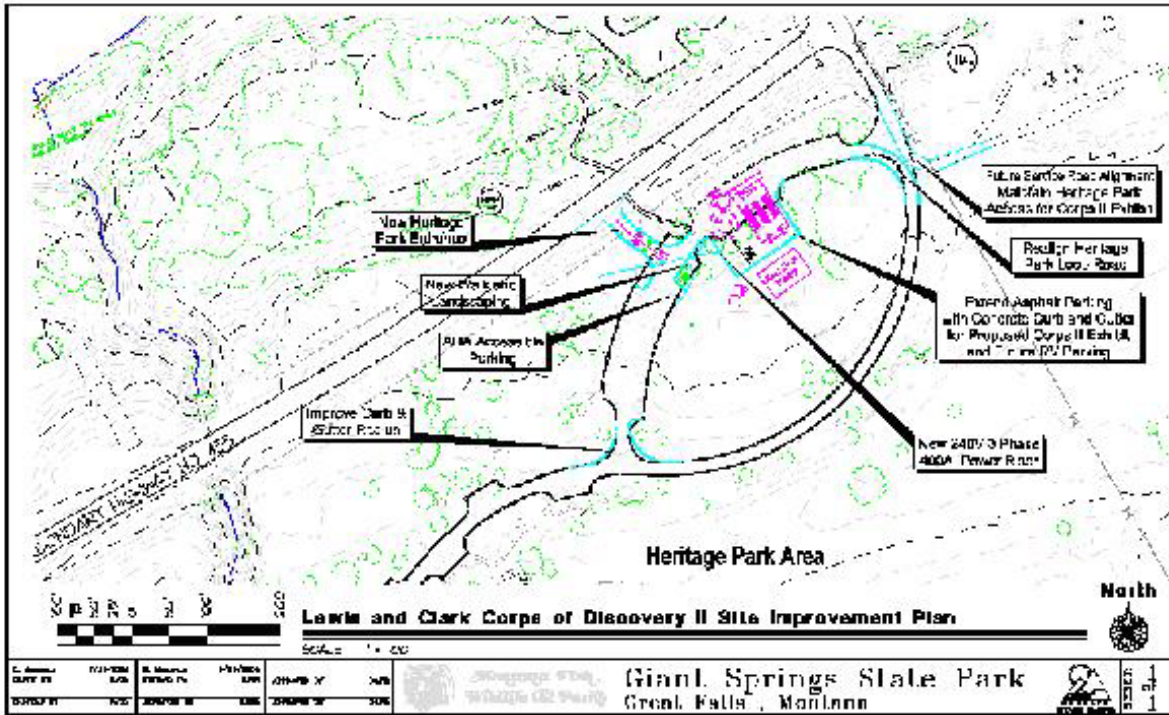
Land Type	Acres	Land Type	Acres
a) Developed		d) Floodplain	0
• Residential	0	(e) Productive	
• Industrial	0	• Irrigated cropland	0
b) Open Space/Recreation	.21	• Dry cropland	0
c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	0	• Forestry	0
		• Rangeland	0
		• other	0

8. **Map:** attach an original 8 1/2" x 11" or larger section of the most recent USGS 7.5' series topographic map showing the location and boundaries of the area that would be affected by the proposed action. A different map scale may be substituted if more appropriate or if required by agency rule. If available, a site plan should also be attached.



9. Site Plan:

Giant Springs State Park, Heritage Unit Proposed Site Improvement Plan



9. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

(b) Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks	\$83,200

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
National Park Service	Corps II Exhibit (6/25/04-7/4/04)

10. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:

This project would modify the existing Heritage Unit of Giant Springs State Park to meet the requirements and specifications of the National Park Service Corps of Discovery II (Lewis & Clark) traveling exhibit to be hosted by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks during the Explore the Big Sky Signature event from June 25 through July 4, 2005.

The following actions would be taken:

- 1) The entrance to the Heritage Unit will be moved approximately 250 feet to the west in order to establish a level and more prominent entrance into the main Heritage Unit parking area.
- 2) An existing asphalt parking area will be enlarged and concrete curb and gutters will be installed to accommodate the main tents and trailers, which comprise the Corps II exhibits.
- 3) Landscaping will be done to improve the appearance of the entrance and exhibit pad.
- 4) Installation of ADA accessible parking.
- 5) Installation of a new walk and landscaping.
- 6) Realignment of the park loop road to enhance the curve radius for larger vehicles.
- 7) Installation of a new 240V 3 phase 400 A power riser.
- 8) Installation of appropriate public use, traffic and directional signs.

Throughout the design and construction process FWP intends to make these modifications permanent and the modifications will augment the future uses of the park identified in the *Giant Springs Area Management Plan*.

11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Region Four – Great Falls)

Dan Smith – former Giant Springs State Park Manager

Chris Dantic – Giant Springs State Park Interpretive Specialist

Ray Swartz – Maintenance Supervisor

Roger Semler – Parks Program Manager

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Parks Division - Helena)

Tom Reilly – Assistant Administrator

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (Design and Construction Bureau - Helena)

Bardell Mangum – Landscape Architect

Ken Phillips – former Construction Supervisor

Paul Valle – Design and Construction Bureau Chief

Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Pete Brown

National Park Service – CORPS II

Elsie Dilliwaard

Explore the Big Sky – Great Falls, Montana

Explorers Council

Events Team

Community Committee

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil that would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		X	a.
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. This project would install approximately .21 acres of new asphalt paving. This will result in a permanent loss of approximately 9,000 square feet of vegetative cover. In the future, removal and rehabilitation of the existing group use area may result in some mitigation of this loss. The existing sprinkler system will be relocated adjacent to the new asphalt pad to serve an ornamental grass area that currently does not have irrigation.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c))			X			a.
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. <u>For P-R/D-J projects</u> , will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		X				
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. During construction there will be minor impacts to the air quality of the site resulting from dust, exhaust from construction vehicles and equipment. These impacts will be temporary and minimal. If significant dust is generated from the project, water trucks will be utilized to wet periodically wet down the project area. Exhaust from idling vehicles will be kept to a minimum. No other mitigation is deemed necessary.

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X			a.
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		X				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		X				
n. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. The increased area surfaced with asphalt (9,000 square feet) will have some effect on storm water runoff and drainage. The site asphalt surfacing will be designed with appropriate slopes and gutters to properly divert surface runoff.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		X	a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		X				
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. The project will impact approximately 9,000 square feet non-native ornamental grasses, shrubs and trees. Two large birch trees will be dug up with a tree spade and transplanted elsewhere in the park.

5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		X				
i. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				
j. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. Increased noise levels will result during the site development and construction phase and during the duration of the Corps II event due to visitor use increases in the area. These noise levels will be minor and will not require mitigation.

2. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

3. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

4. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?			X			a.
f. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. Traffic is anticipated to increase in this area due to increased public use during the 10-day period that the Corps II exhibit is on site. Since recreational use of Giant Springs Road is already very high the increase will not result in any additional social impacts. Appropriate traffic control signage and devices will be installed.

5. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:			X			a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources						b.
f. Define projected maintenance costs.						c.
g. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- The Corps of Discovery II exhibit scheduled for June 25 – July 4, 2005 will attract an increased number of visitors to the site. Enhanced services for public safety, security, maintenance, sanitation, waste disposal will be required. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks will manage this 10-day event through an Incident Command System, thus ensuring that these services are provided.
- Capital Funding is provided by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The estimated cost of the site improvements and modifications is \$83,200.
- On-going operations and maintenance funding is provided FWP – Parks Division. There is currently a sufficient budget in the overall Giant Springs State Park budget to provide for these modest improvements.

6. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

7. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		X				
e. Other:		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. The old Silver smelter site is nearby. The new entrance and pad were located in such a way as to have no impact on the historic site.

C. SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

1. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT				Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)			X			a.
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if, they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		X				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		X				

Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):

- a. The overall impacts due to this project are low. Any changes to the park will be beneficial to the short-term use and enjoyment of the public during the 10 days that the Corps II exhibit is on site. Long-term visitor use and enjoyment of the park will also be enhanced through adaptive uses of the new amenities at the site.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, CONTINUED

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

No Action Alternative:

The area would not be modified to meet the requirements of the National Park Service Corps of Discovery II exhibit and the community and state would not benefit from this unique opportunity to host and experience this exhibit. While Corps II would likely still come to Great Falls, they would be hosted at another site that does not support fully their mission and goals. Giant Springs State Park would not be able to make long-term modifications that will augment the planning efforts done in the last few years.

Project as proposed:

Giant Springs State Parks and Great Falls will be fully partnered with the National Park Service in hosting and presenting the Corps of Discovery II exhibit to the public. A lasting legacy to Giant Springs State Park from participation with the Explore the Big Sky Signature Event will be achieved by hosting Corps II at Giant Springs. The new asphalt area and other improvements will be retained for future adaptive use in accordance with the *Giant Springs State Park Management Plan*. Visitors will be able to participate in a wider variety of recreational events at the State Park when compared to other proposed venues. The site plan in this proposal will fully meet the standards and specification required for Corps II venues.

Alternative # 1:

The original host site for the Corps of Discovery II Exhibit in Great Falls was proposed at the Montana State University - Great Falls College of Technology, located on 16th Avenue, Great Falls, Montana. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks proposed to host the Corps II exhibit at the Heritage Park Unit of Giant Springs State Park was sanctioned by the Great Falls Explorers Council in July of 2004, based on a determination that the Heritage Park site was a preferable venue that met all of the standards and specifications for Corps II venues.

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

None identified

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The modifications and to Giant Springs State Park needed for the park to host the Corps of Discovery II exhibit are consistent with long-term park plans. Modifying the park now will allow the park to host this unique exhibit during the Explore the Big Sky Signature event in 2005. Maximum community benefit will be achieved by hosting this event in the park. The site improvements associated with this proposal will leave a lasting legacy for future visitors to enjoy.

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

- 1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

With no anticipated public opposition or significant impacts to the environment an EA is the appropriate level of analysis.

- 2. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

The Explore the Big Sky Events Team has been integrally involved in the decision making process concerning the Corps of Discovery II visit to Great Falls. In addition the Great Falls Explorers Council was involved in the final decision to move the Corps II Exhibit to Giant Springs State Park. Both of these groups are citizen based community involvement groups.

This level of discussion and public input is deemed appropriate.

- 3. Duration of comment period, if any.**

This EA will have a 30-day comment period starting October 28, 2004 and continuing through November 28, 2004. All comments must be postmarked or received before 5:00 pm November 28, 2004.

Comments may be directed to:

**Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Heritage Unit Modifications EA
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405**

Or may be emailed to: **rsemmler@state.mt.us**

4. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:

Roger Semler
Regional Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
4600 Giant Springs Road
Great Falls MT 59405
(406) 454-5859